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SUBJECT: AMBASSADOR MEETS THE TIDJANES

Classified By: POLITICAL OFFICER OSMAN N. TAT FOR REASONS 1.4 (B) AND (D).

SUMMARY

¶1. (C) In a long discussion with Ambassador Jacobs, the extremely influential spokesman of the Tidjane Brotherhood, Abdoul Aziz Sy al Ibn (Junior), underlined his community's dismay at President Wade's overt Mouridism and his use of state funds to promote their interests. Both Sy, and his elder son, Babacar, described Wade as a dictator and firmly believe that he is positioning his son, Karim, to become President. Nonetheless, the largest brotherhood remains engaged and hopes to diffuse tensions between the Government and the opposition parties. END SUMMARY.

¶2. (SBU) During a visit to the holy City of Tivaouane, the spiritual capital of Senegal's Tidjane Brotherhood, Ambassador Jacobs called on Abdoul Aziz Sy al Ibn (Junior). Brother to ailing Khalif Mansour Sy, Aziz Sy is both his spokesperson and serves as the Khalif for practical purposes. He has initiated several large building projects in Tivaouane to include new schools, a cultural center and a religious complex. The meeting at his opulent home included his son, Moustapha who heads the Brotherhood's Youth Movement, and his eldest son, Babacar, who has a number of business interests. According to Aziz Sy, 65 percent of Senegalese belong to the brotherhood.

WADE DOES NOT RESPECT US!

¶3. (C) The normally serene Aziz Sy was wistful when discussing Wade's overt allegiance to the Mouride Brotherhood. He and the rest of the Tidjane leadership were particularly dismayed to see Wade prostrate himself at the feet of Mouride Khalif Saliou Mbakce after Wade's re-election. Sy went on to say that he had received information that Wade is using state funds to support Mouride interests and not, as he claims, his own money. These funds include USD 14 million for a new mosque in Dakar, and USD 200 million to develop the Mouride capital of Touba's infrastructure. Aziz Sy noted that until he had concrete evidence he was not planning to initiate any debate on the matter, &We must be rational not emotional.⁸

BUT, OUR RELATIONS REMAIN GOOD

¶4. (C) Sy went on to say that in a recent meeting he had told Wade that as President he was President of all Senegalese and that he should not be over-involved with the Mourides. He added that Wade must remain equidistant and that he could spend his own money any way he wished but that public funds should be used for the public good. Aziz Sy expects to meet Wade in the very near future to urge him to

re-start dialogue with the opposition parties. In an anecdotal story he said that Wade had asked him how he could meet with an opposition who had been so impolite about him. In response Aziz Sy told him that God had chosen him above all other Senegalese to lead the nation and that as such he had a duty to deal with the good and the bad. He reminded him that the nation was built on a philosophy of dialogue and that he must be a uniter of the people.

KARIM FOR PRESIDENT

¶5. (C) There was general consensus that Wade is positioning his son to run for President. During a bountiful lunch Babacar said that Karim will be imposed on the Senegalese people, &He has huge reserves of money and will govern with a younger generation of people who have so far been excluded from the exercise of power. Wade is dangerous and manipulates everybody.⁸ This same sentiment was echoed by Aziz Sy who said Wade corrupts the religious leaders to whom the citizens listen and that he could do whatever he wanted to include leaving his son as President; &With the passiveness of the Senegalese people nothing would surprise me in this country⁸.

THE TALIBES -- AN UNACCEPTABLE PROBLEM

¶6. (C) In answer to a question concerning begging by children who attend Koranic schools, Aziz Sy said that Islam does not condone begging and that Daaras (religious schools) need to offer children vocational as well as spiritual training so that they can find jobs. He said that poverty and a lack of education means that parents are more than willing to give their children away to unscrupulous marabouts because they naively think they will get a free education. He believes the solution lies in educating marabouts about

DAKAR 00001266 002 OF 002

children,s rights and their responsibilities as religious teachers.

COMMENT

¶7. (C) The Tidjanes remain frustrated by Wade,s lack of respect for the traditional equilibrium between the state and the brotherhoods. Before the presidential election, Wade tried to calm their anger by building a new education complex, offering land to the Tidjane Khalif and, it is rumored, giving the Brotherhood money. Yet, the relationship remains ambivalent. Wade is no longer hostile towards them for having refused to support him when he was in opposition but he his providing way more funds to Touba than Tivaouane and keeping the Tidjane on the peripheries of power. As has been his style, Wade is a master at sowing discord between various groups in order to increase his own power but as is their tradition the Tidjane leadership will try to deal with their problems in a rational and peaceful manner. Should Wade proceed with efforts to have Karim succeed him, it will clearly be without Tidjane support. END COMMENT.

¶8. (U) Visit Embassy Dakar,s SIPRNET website at <http://www.state.sgov.gov/p/af/dakar>.

JACOBS